Amendments to the Drawings:

Fig. 7 has been amended to correct the spelling of "Expansion."

Attachment: Annotated Sheet Showing Changes

Replacement Sheet

R E M A R K S

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 7 has been amended to correct the spelling of "Expansion."

Submitted herewith are a corrected sheet of formal drawing which incorporates the amendment and an annotated sheet showing the changes made thereto.

No new matter has been added, and it is respectfully requested that the amendment to Fig. 7 be approved and entered.

THE CLAIMS

The claims have been amended to make some minor grammatical improvements and to correct some minor antecedent basis problems so as to put them in better form for issuance in a U.S. patent.

No new matter has been added, and it is respectfully requested that the amendments to the claims be approved and entered.

It is respectfully submitted, moreover, that the amendments to the claims are <u>not</u> related to patentability, and do not narrow the scope of the claims either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents.

THE PRIOR ART REJECTION

Claims 1-12 were rejected under 35 USC 102 as being anticipated by USP 6,591,258 ("Stier et al"). This rejection, however, is respectfully traversed.

According to the present invention as recited in claim 1, a technical support system is provided which comprises: a service information portal section which provides web pages as information input and output interfaces; a knowledge base section which stores various claim reports and solutions which correspond to the claim reports and which are provided by at least one engineer; and a claim handling section which registers in the knowledge base section a new claim report in which at least a claim title is structured as a combination of predetermined items of definition information based on claim content input via a client web page, and which manages the registered new claim report as an unsolved claim requiring an answer from an engineer. As recited in claim 1, the claim handling section determines an engineer who is to take charge of a supporting task for preparing a solution to the new claim report, from among a plurality of engineers of a division-in-charge of preparing the solution to the new claim report based on ranks of importance of supporting tasks already assigned to the engineers of the division-in-charge, and based on progress states of the supporting tasks.

It is respectfully submitted that Stier et al does not disclose, teach or suggest determining an engineer who is to take charge of a supporting task for preparing a solution to a new claim report from among a plurality of engineers of a division-in-charge of preparing the solution to the new claim report as according to the present invention as recited in claim 1, and it is respectfully submitted that Stier et al also does not disclose, teach or suggest a claim handling section that determines the engineer to take charge of the supporting task based on ranks of importance of supporting tasks already assigned to the engineers of the division-in-charge, and based on progress states of the supporting tasks, as recited in independent claim 1.

With this structure of the claimed present invention, a supporting task that has a high rank of importance can be assigned to an engineer who can quickly begin the supporting task (e.g. by placing the high priority task ahead of a low-priority task in which the engineer is already engaged). Therefore, a supporting task for a solution for a new claim report can be prevented from being delayed by taking into consideration the tasks already being performed by the engineers of a division-in-charge that is tasked with preparing the solution for the new claim report.

By contrast, according to Stier et al, the need for new knowledge in a knowledge base may be recognized through

interactions 106 with agents (i.e. personnel who answer queries

by consulting the knowledge base). The knowledge maintenance

reporting subsystem 42 of Stier et al generates periodic reports

of interactions 106 for review by a knowledge author 14 (who

authors new knowledge to be entered in the database). The

knowledge author 14 reviews the interactions 106 and determines

which ones are appropriate candidates to spur the entry of new

knowledge into the knowledge base. From these candidates, the

knowledge author 14 categorizes the issues by priority to

determine which knowledge must be urgently added to the knowledge

base. According to Stier et al, this categorization by the

knowledge author 14 may be reviewed by a knowledge analyst 15,

who is an individual tasked with managing a backlog of new

knowledge to be entered and who approves high-level entry of

knowledge into the knowledge base. Then, new content for the

knowledge base is authored in the order of determined priority

and is reviewed, and added to the knowledge base. In addition,

Stier et al discloses that the activation of knowledge objects in

the knowledge base may also be prioritized. See columns 51-58 of

Stier et al.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the ranking

pointed to by the Examiner in Stier et al is a ranking of issues

that have yet to be worked on, and that Stier et al discloses

prioritizing the activation of knowledge objects in the database

(see columns 57-58 of Stier et al). By contrast, according to
the present invention the selection of an engineer is performed
based on ranks of importance of supporting tasks already assigned
to engineers of a division-in-charge of preparing the solution to
the new claim report and based on progress states of the
supporting tasks.

It is respectfully submitted that Stier et al clearly does
not disclose, teach or suggest a group of knowledge authors 14
from which one is selected to perform a new supporting task,
based on ranks of importance and progress states of knowledge
creation tasks already assigned to the knowledge authors.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Stier et al
does not disclose, teach or suggest the structure of the claim
handling section of the present invention as recited in claim 1,
which determines an engineer who is to take charge of a
supporting task for preparing a solution to the new claim report,
from among a plurality of engineers of a division-in-charge of
preparing the solution to the new claim report based on ranks of
importance of supporting tasks already assigned to the engineers
of the division-in-charge, and based on progress states of the
supporting tasks.

In addition, it is noted that independent claims 5 and 9
recite a method and a recording medium/program having the same

-15-

(above described) features of the technical support system of the present invention as recited in claim 1.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the amended independent claims 1, 5 and 9, as well as claims 2-4, 6-8 and 10-12 respectively depending therefrom, all clearly patentably distinguish over Stier et al, under 35 USC 102 as well as under 35 USC 103.

* *

Entry of this Amendment, allowance of the claims and the passing of this application to issue are respectfully solicited.

If the Examiner has any comments, questions, objections or recommendations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the telephone number given below for prompt action.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Holtz
Reg. No. 33,902

Frishauf, Holtz, Goodman & Chick, P.C.
220 Fifth Avenue - 16th Floor
New York, New York 10001-7708
Tel. No. (212) 319-4900
Fax No. (212) 319-5101

DH:iv

Unit (J)	Unit (E)
U01 給紙ユニット	U01 Paper feeder unit
U02 オプション給紙ユニット	U02 LCF/PFU/PFP
U03 光学/レーザーユニット	U03 Optional/Laser Unit
U04 ドラム	U04 Drum
U05 チャージャー/グリッド	U05 Charger/Grid
U06 現像器ユニット	U06 Developer unit
U07 トナー/カートリッジ	U07 Toner/Cartridge
U08 クリーナーユニット	U08 Cleaner unit
U09 プロセスユニット全般	U09 Process unit in overall
U10 機体内用紙搬送ユニット	U10 Paper transport unit
U11 定着器ユニット	U11 Fuser unit
U12 排紙ユニット	U12 Exit unit
U13 ADD	U13 ADD
U14 ADF	U14 ADF
U15 ソーター/フィニッシャー	U15 Sorter/Finisher
U16 ドライブユニット	U16 Drive Unit
U17 コンパネユニット	U17 Control Panel unit
U18 PC板、その他電気部品	U18 PWA or other electrical circuit
U19 電源ユニット/高圧トランス	U19 Power supply unit/HVT
U20 HDD/拡張メモリー	U20 HDD/~~Expanssion~~ memory *Expansion*
U21 ネットワークコントローラー	U21 Network controller
U22 FAX/NCUボード	U22 FAX/NCU board
U23 本体ファームウエア	U23 Firmware in machine
U24 ドライバーソフトウエア	U24 Driver software
U25 ネットワーク環境	U25 Network environment
U26 外装カバー	U26 Exterior covers
U27 梱包箱	U27 Packaging
U28 その他	U28 Others

FIG.7